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FREEDOM OF THE DANUBE

By Constantin Fotitch

Marshal Tito's orders to shoot down American transport planes, which inadvertently fly over Yugoslav territory, are no idle aberration on the part of Stalin's most important Balkan puppet. The Department of State had ample evidence to bolster its charges that these "outrageous" actions were "no accident". And the full explanation has nothing to do with any "small-nation inferiority complex", as suggested by one Washington correspondent.

These seemingly reckless steps are sponsored by Russia as a part of the developing program of converting all of Central and Southeastern Europe into a Soviet dependency. That the regime imposed on Yugoslavia should use what is probably lend-lease material to shoot unarmed American planes is, of course, sensational. But fundamentally this affront is less significant than the Russian effort to close the Danube, or the parallel effort to take over the Dardanelles.

The latest Russian diplomatic endeavor to get control of the Straits was formally rejected by the United States Government last week, and is therefore to the fore in public consciousness. Curiously little attention, however, is being paid to the problem of the future control of the Danube, though this is the most fundamental part of Russia's plan for cementing economic and political domination throughout the area of its military occupation.

It is realized that the future Danube regime is one of 26 unsettled issues at the Paris Peace Conference. But there is as yet little general understanding of the differences separating Russia and the Democracies on this issue, or of why its importance is momentous.

II

The British and Americans maintain that navigation on the Danube, 1175 miles of which pass through the heart of Europe, should be opened to all flags, as it was in the past for almost a century. The Soviet Union stubbornly refuses to insert any mention of freedom of navigation in the treaties and insists that the whole Danubian question be reserved solely for discussion among the riparian States.

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The developing issue affects the future of all the Central and Eastern European States. For it is a question of whether those countries shall have opportunity to use freely this natural line of communication from Vienna to the Black Sea -- important not only for their mutual relations but also for their contact with the outside world -- or whether the Soviet shall be allowed to tighten its grip by barring from the Danube any flag but those of the stream-bank countries. All of these happen to be under Russian control or domination.

For nearly a century the principle of free navigation on the Danube was an integral part of European life. Extending the application of the rule, established at the Congress of Vienna, to the whole length of the navigable Danube, Article XV of the Treaty of Paris of 1856 declared these arrangements to be "a part of European Public Law".

To give effect to this policy, the Congress of Paris created a temporary European Commission, composed of the great European Powers and Turkey, whose duty it was to make possible and to supervise navigation at the mouth of the Danube. The valuable services rendered by the Commission and its usefulness were soon recognized by all the parties concerned. So its life was successively prolonged, by the Congress of Berlin in 1878, and by a Treaty of London in 1883, until it was made a permanent international body by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

Beside this already existing European Commission, whose competence remained limited to the mouth of the river, the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 established a new organ, the International Commission of the Danube, composed of representatives of France, Great Britain, Italy and all the riparian States. The duty of the new Commission was to assure freedom of navigation to the middle and upper Danube, and to prevent any obstacle or discrimination in this respect on the part of any stream-bank State.

The well-administered Danubian regime, as created by the peace treaties resulting from the First World War, proved to be in the interest not only of the Danubian countries but also of the whole European community. It greatly contributed to rapid economic recovery after 1919. With rail and road communications severely damaged by the war, the Danube remained for several years practically the only means of communication between the countries through which this great river flows, and also assured their contact with the outside world.

During long years of service at the Yugoslav Foreign Office, I had many opportunities to deal with those problems, as well as to be associated with the work of the Danubian Commission. I have no recollection that we had to complain at any time about the activities of the Commis-

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sion, nor was Yugoslav independence in any way restricted by our obligations to the International Statute of the Danube. Quite the contrary.

III

Today the Soviets not only oppose the restoration of the international regime of the Danube -- interrupted by the war and abolished by Germany in 1940 -- but they go further by refusing to include in an international act even affirmation of the principle of freedom of navigation on the Danube. The reason given in support of this policy is that the Danubian Statute is not in harmony with the independence of the stream-bank States, and that consequently the whole problem should be reserved for discussion exclusively among those Governments.

In spite of this seeming concern to protect the full sovereignty and independence of the Danubian States, the real reason behind the Soviet attitude is almost obvious. Nothing could be more harmful to the independence of those States than this suppression of a well-established principle which buttressed their political freedom by protecting their freedom of communication. Today all the riparian States, except Bavaria and Württemberg (both on the uppermost end of the river), are either under Soviet occupation or have governments which obediently carry out instructions received from Moscow. To leave the discussions of the Danubian problems to the sole competence of those States, under the pretext of protecting their independence, would in fact amount to the establishment of a Danubian Statute by ukase from the Kremlin. It would bring this most important and natural way of communication under the complete and undisputed control of Moscow, and would be a final blow to the economic freedom and independence of all Central and Eastern Europe.

The Soviet attitude in this respect does not differ from the attitude of those who in the past strove to achieve domination over Danubian Europe. In 1856 the decisions of the Congress of Paris were adopted in spite of the very strong opposition of Austria, which at that time considered that part of Europe as its exclusive zone of influence. When Hitler overran the Continent, one of his primary concerns was to abolish the Danubian Commissions. And when the USSR became technically a riparian State, by annexing the Bessarabian section of the mouth of the Danube, Moscow insisted on association with the Danubian regime. The first German reaction to this request was that the Danubian problem should be reserved for the competence of the real riparian States.

Nevertheless, the Nazis, then anxious to maintain friendly relations with Russia, accepted a proposal that a conference be held to discuss the Danubian problem in view of the new political situation in Europe. The Conference convened at Bucharest in December, 1940, but

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achieved no practical result because Germany was not willing to share its dominant position with the Soviet Union.

IV

The Danubian policy of the Soviet would not be complete without a similar attitude on the question of the Straits, since international statutes for the Straits and the Danube are inseparable. This river flows into the Black Sea, and the freedom of its traffic would be of no effect without freedom of passage from the Black Sea through the Straits, guaranteed by an international regime.

On the other hand, Russian domination of the Danube would have to be supplemented by domination of the Straits in order to complete the Soviet grip over Southeastern Europe. This explains Moscow's demand upon Turkey for a joint control of the Straits, and replacement of the Montreux International Convention on the Straits by a convention limited only to the countries bordering on the Black Sea.

The drive for Yugoslav annexation of Trieste, or its internationalization controlled in fact by the Soviet, is also a part of this well-rounded Russian plan. To insure complete domination of Eastern Europe, already politically under Soviet control, it must be deprived of free communication with the outside world. Its entire economic life must be confined within the orbit of the Soviet Grossraum, and to achieve this the Danube must become an inland waterway -- a western Volga -- with the Straits and Trieste also under Russian control.

In the field of air communications the Balkan countries have already been closed to what would normally be a growing international traffic. Yugoslavia, which before the last war was an important link in international air communications, has under the Tito regime refused to enter into any agreement with American or British airlines for long-distance traffic. And this position is being resolutely maintained.

To surrender the Danube to Russian control would be a decisive step toward cutting Europe into two zones, and providing an advanced base for further Communist penetration of the West. For nearly a century, the European countries have maintained on the Danube an open door regime of service to the whole of Europe. Will the open door be replaced by the iron curtain?

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From 1935 to 1944 Constantin Fotitch was first Minister and then Ambassador of Yugoslavia to the United States. He was dismissed by Tito.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. III, NO. 35

By Frank C. Hanighen August 28, 1946

The skies have cleared since last week when the truculent Yugoslav Government seemed likely to plunge Europe into war. Tito backed down after our ultimatum, at least sufficiently to enable the American State Department, in a rather labored way, to save some face. But the Yugoslav dictator did not yield a particle on what has undoubtedly been one of his principal concerns - communications.

This point has gone almost entirely unnoticed by commentators. (In our current Analysis the importance of this factor is explained in detail.) Daily developments have shown Tito's stubbornness on the matter. He has made no move to open the air over Yugoslavia to peaceful commercial travel. He further left no doubt of his emphasis by demanding return of Yugoslav barges and ships formerly used on the great artery of the Danube.

Meanwhile, over-all Russian diplomatic strategy regained the offensive by a characteristic show. The Ukraine did its master's bidding by accusing Greece of fomenting war. Things were clearly getting back to what has actually become a sort of normal war of nerves. Russia, it seems, did not want to carry too far the Yugoslav dispute -- only far enough to test our temper. A détente, welcome to the peacemakers in Paris, has commenced; but with no assurance that it will not be broken again.

For it was noted that Litvinoff, symbol of co-operation with the West, was removed from the Moscow Foreign Office; a change interpreted as a strengthening of the belligerent nationalist elements in the Politburo. He has recently held only a nominal position, being "kept on ice for Western consumption". Also, Solomon Lozowsky, another "old Bolshevik" and "Western man" was ousted at the same time as Litvinoff. Both men are Jews, as was Maisky, similarly dismissed last winter. Extreme nationalistic tendencies, whether in Russia or other totalitarian states, are usually mixed with anti-Semitism.

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A clever British-baiting campaign was climaxed last week by the publication of an article in Look by Elliott Roosevelt, first of a series which should be entitled "High Life with Father". The articles profess to Reveal History, but are actually propaganda in the fellow-traveller key. The tactics behind such propaganda (purveyed more honestly in the Daily Worker) may be described as follows: instead of attempting the difficult and perhaps impossible task of defending Russia today, it is better to attack the British and thereby to weaken the Anglo-American front at Paris and elsewhere. Among those pushing this drive are the two Roosevelt boys, Elliott and James, both of whom owe much to their late father.

Elliott seeks to repay his debt by portraying his father as a "liberal" fighting the "reactionary" Churchill during the war years; a picture which the surviving victims of the elder Roosevelt's performances at Yalta would find difficulty in recognizing. The son tries to fit both F.D.R. and the Atlantic Charter under one halo, forgetting that the dead President later disavowed the Charter and called it a "scrap of paper". Elliott's description of the Atlantic Conference is colorful, but it departs widely from the one in Sumner Welles' memorandum, published in the Pearl Harbor investigation hearings. Anyway, it's tough on the British and Churchill, and is designed to bolster the Roosevelt myth, now in a rather sickly condition.

This diversionary anti-British drive, which appears in various other publications, includes a great deal of valiant fist-shaking at British imperialism on the

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score of Palestine. Regular Zionists who know that the Soviet Union opposes Zionism have been surprised recently by the number of converts to Zionism who shed bold words in behalf of Palestine Jewry. Roosevelt, they intimate, would never have permitted this rape of Zionism by the wicked British.

Unfortunately for this kind of talk, Arab sources report existence of a hitherto unpublished note from Roosevelt to King Ibn Saud. This communication, it is said, was even more warmly reassuring to that great enemy of Zionism than a similar note published last November (See NMG, Oct. 17, 24, 1945). Perusal of the unpublished note, it is asserted, would make the average Zionist as anti-Roosevelt as the Chicago Tribune. A copy of the note appeared last year in one issue of two large Syrian newspapers, but was suppressed by the Syrian Government at the request of Washington. Arabs are not disinclined to publish it, however, and may do so if Mr. Truman tries to curry favor with the New York City vote at their expense.

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The primary elections in New York have inspired quite justifiable satisfaction in Republican circles. While a strong Republican tide has been running and Governor Dewey's popularity has grown strikingly in recent months, the Leftist vote which held the balance of power in former elections loomed as a formidable obstacle. Two minor parties (the Communist-directed American Labor Party and the Liberal Party, an organization of somewhat less power and importance) together delivered about 600,000 votes for the Roosevelt ticket in 1944. In the Governorship election of 1942, the ALP deserted the Democrats and ran an independent candidate, a maneuver which helped Dewey win. This year, heads of these parties have promised to back the Democrats -- so far. But there's an old saying in all wards, "You can't trust a political leader's promises until the votes are counted". At any rate, the primaries last week revealed the surprising fact that the ALP was unable to swing formerly faithful votes. In two important congressional districts, Republican candidates who were backed by ALP lost to conservative Republican candidates; and in other districts the ALP vote dropped. These signs of the disintegration of the balance-of-power vote has definitely boosted Republican stock -- and not only in the Union League Club.

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Sweden follows the "middle way" internationally as well as internally. In NMG (July 31, 1946) we described how fear of Russia was a compelling motive behind Sweden's proposal for a one billion kronor credit to the Soviet Union, which the latter apparently wants to cinch by the odd amenity of firing an occasional V-Bomb into Swedish territory. Sweden has no more intention of entering the Russia orbit than it has of joining a Western bloc: and now seeks to counterbalance such ties as may result from a Russian loan by an economic link with the United States. The Wall Street Journal (August 6) reports that Martin Waldenstrom, head of Grangesberg Company, largest iron mining firm in Sweden, has visited the United States and tried to sell iron ore to American firms. The deal failed, but in Sweden it is felt that chances are still good, particularly because of American talk of stock-piling raw materials. The very fact that at present most of Sweden's coal imports (Sweden has no coal within its borders) come from the United States may be an important motive in trying to arrange such an exchange of materials. All in all, Sweden is playing much the same game as during the past war, going about its business on the sidelines, refusing to team up with any of the rival giants.

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The decision of the fledgling de-control commission to place meat, soy beans and cottonseed oil back under OPA control, while leaving grains and dairy products

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on the free market, is regarded by Washington observers as "political". When CIO leaders met in Washington -- strange coincidence -- just at the time when the commission had to make up its mind, its members were not exactly inattentive to the labor leaders' demands for a price roll-back. Also, the commission is said to have been influenced by a possibly shrewd calculation current among OPA economists. The latter have noted the large corn crop and the fact that the price of corn has been slipping downward below the ceiling price and may move even lower. This decline will provide cheap feed for stockmen and might ease the price of meat; it might even break the black market, say these OPA hopefuls. The latter, in short, are gambling on the success of meat re-control to ensure continuation of OPA -- and, incidentally, of their precious jobs. But farmers and the meat industry believe that the black marketeers will win.

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The economic future of China may be revolutionized as the result of an important recent discovery, according to American business men just returned from the Far East. Until now, it had been the opinion of all economists that China must depend on Manchuria for industrial development because of the supposed scarcity of mineral resources in China proper. But this assumption has been shattered recently by the disclosures of captured Japanese economists who say that the northern provinces, situated between the Yellow River and Manchuria, contain far greater mineral riches than does Manchuria. They have turned over to the Chinese authorities detailed surveys to prove their contention. The Japanese had obtained this knowledge in recent years and had no time to develop the resources before defeat came.

Briefly, the Japanese claim that rich deposits of iron, coal, gold, tungsten, manganese, lead, alumina, magnesite and asbestos lie in the following provinces of North China: Hopeh, Shansi, Shensi, Shantung, Suiyuan, Chahar and Jehol. A comparison of the iron in this area with that in Manchuria is interesting. According to Japan Year Book figures, Manchuria has about 1.6 billion tons of iron ore. But the average iron content of these ores is very low -- only 0.6 per cent of Manchurian iron ore has 50 per cent or more of iron. The Japanese place the iron ore in North China at about 700 million tons, but emphasize that this ore is definitely high-grade and far superior to that in Manchuria. They estimate that North China has a far greater quantity of economically disposable iron ore than Manchuria.

It had already been known that this area contained rich deposits of coal. While Manchuria has about 20 billion tons of coal, North China has at least 150 billion. Exploitation would make China the third largest coal producing area in the world. This iron and coal, plus other minerals, should make North China an industrial El Dorado. The Japanese experts disconsolately say that if they had obtained this picture in 1931, they would never have wasted time on Manchuria.

The Chinese meanwhile are now seeking to check up on the Japanese claims in the areas mentioned. Even if the Japanese claims are considerably discounted, the discovery is of the highest importance. Development of this area can provide a sound industrial base in China proper, with all the advantages of greater proximity to the main population areas of the country.

It would have important political results. Any plan to exploit the areas concerned would probably result in an intensification of the Civil War, as Chinese Government forces would have to clean out the Communists who are there in force. On the other hand, if China were to build her industrial base in the northern provinces, the international situation would be eased, with a marked reduction in friction between Russia and China. Russia, it is argued, has no immediate ambition to develop Manchuria. If Nationalist China should concentrate its energies on developing North China, leaving Manchuria "fallow", then Manchuria would constitute a sort of buffer between Russia and China.

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Notes and Quotes

A well-informed American observer, who has just returned from Europe, writes us about war -- a radio war -- over Yugoslavia: "The American radio station in Gorizia, Venezia Giulia, will soon have a new transmitter which will make it one of the most powerful in Europe. The only station more powerful in all of Europe is the American station in Munich, with its affiliated network of Frankfurt, Bremerhaven and Paris. This is very fortunate for us, since the Russians have purposely increased the power of all their stations along the demarcation line in order to broadcast their propaganda in all sectors. The increase in the power of AES Gorizia will complete the tremendously powerful chain, on our side of the 'iron curtain' reaching all of Italy, Yugoslavia, southern Germany and Austria. In the evening, when it is always easier to receive radio transmissions, we shall extend farther north and into Bulgaria and Hungary. The one unfortunate aspect of this AES Gorizia is that it is but three miles from the border, and would be easy prey for any Yugoslav attack, if there should be one."

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What with the growing complexity of the international situation, it is no wonder, according to the Christian Science Monitor, that State Department corridors ring with the following parody of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky":

'Twas Greenwich and the Gromyko
Did Byrnes and Trygve in the Lie;
All Evatt was the Vandenberg,
And the Tom Connally.

Beware the Molotov, my son!
Avoid its clauses if you can!
Beware the Yalta bird and shun
The red Azerbaijan.

He took his Trieste sword in hand;
Long time the Mukden foe he sought.
So rested he by the nuclear tree,
And fissioned there in thought.

And as in Fulton thought he stood,
The Molotov with ears aflame,
Come Brettoning thru the plenary wood,
And vetoed as it came.

"Offside! No score! and Truman swore
His Iran blade went snicker-snack.
He cleared his throat, Francoed a note,
Requesting quick an answer back.

But what hast Dunn the Molotov?
"Come to my arms, my Bullitt boy,
Oh Acheson, Stettinius,"
He Murphied in his joy.

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Aldous Huxley in a pamphlet Science, Liberty and Peace, published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, utters the following warning about a prevalent American article of faith: "The belief in all-round progress is based upon the wishful dream that one can get something for nothing. Its underlying assumption is that gains in one field do not have to be paid for by losses in other fields. . . . So intense is our faith in the dogma of inevitable progress that it has survived two world wars and still remains flourishing in spite of totalitarianism and the revival of slavery, concentration camps and saturation bombing. . . .

"It is a highly significant fact that all modern dictators, whether of the Right or of the Left, talk incessantly about the golden Future, and justify the most atrocious acts here and now, on the ground that they are means to that glorious end . . . any faith based upon hypothetical occurrences a long time hence must always, in the very nature of things, be hopelessly unrealistic. In practice, faith in the bigger and better future is one of the most potent enemies to present liberty; for rulers feel themselves justified in imposing the most monstrous tyrannies on their subjects for the sake of the wholly imaginary fruits which these tyrannies are expected . . . to bear sometime, let us say, in the twenty-first or twenty-second century."

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